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DIRECTORATE OF
INTELLIGENCE

MEMORANDUM

The Situation in Vietnam

Top Secret

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2 June 1967

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Information as of 1600
2 June 1967

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HIGHLIGHTS

US Marines continue to encounter heavy enemy resistance in the northern provinces of South Vietnam.

I. The Military Situation in South Vietnam:
US Marines of Operation CIMARRON are continuing their efforts to drive Communist troops from strategic hills overlooking allied positions south of the DMZ (Paras. 1-2). Other Marine units launched a new operation--BEAR BITE--in the coastal flatlands east of Quang Tri city (Para. 3). US Marines encountered heavy enemy contact in Quang Tin (Para. 4). An ARVN unit reportedly killed 150 enemy troops just north of Quang Tri city while losing only one killed and 40 wounded (Paras. 5).

the Communist combat village system has been disrupted because of allied operations in Quang Ngai Province (Paras. 9-10).

II. Political Developments in South Vietnam: The Provisional National Assembly (Constituent Assembly) was scheduled to review completed upper house election laws on 2 June (Paras. 1-2).

III. Military Developments in North Vietnam:
A destroyed major road and rail bridge near Hanoi was replaced by a permanent structure in about 20 days (Paras. 1-3).

IV. Other Communist Military Developments: There is nothing of significance to report.

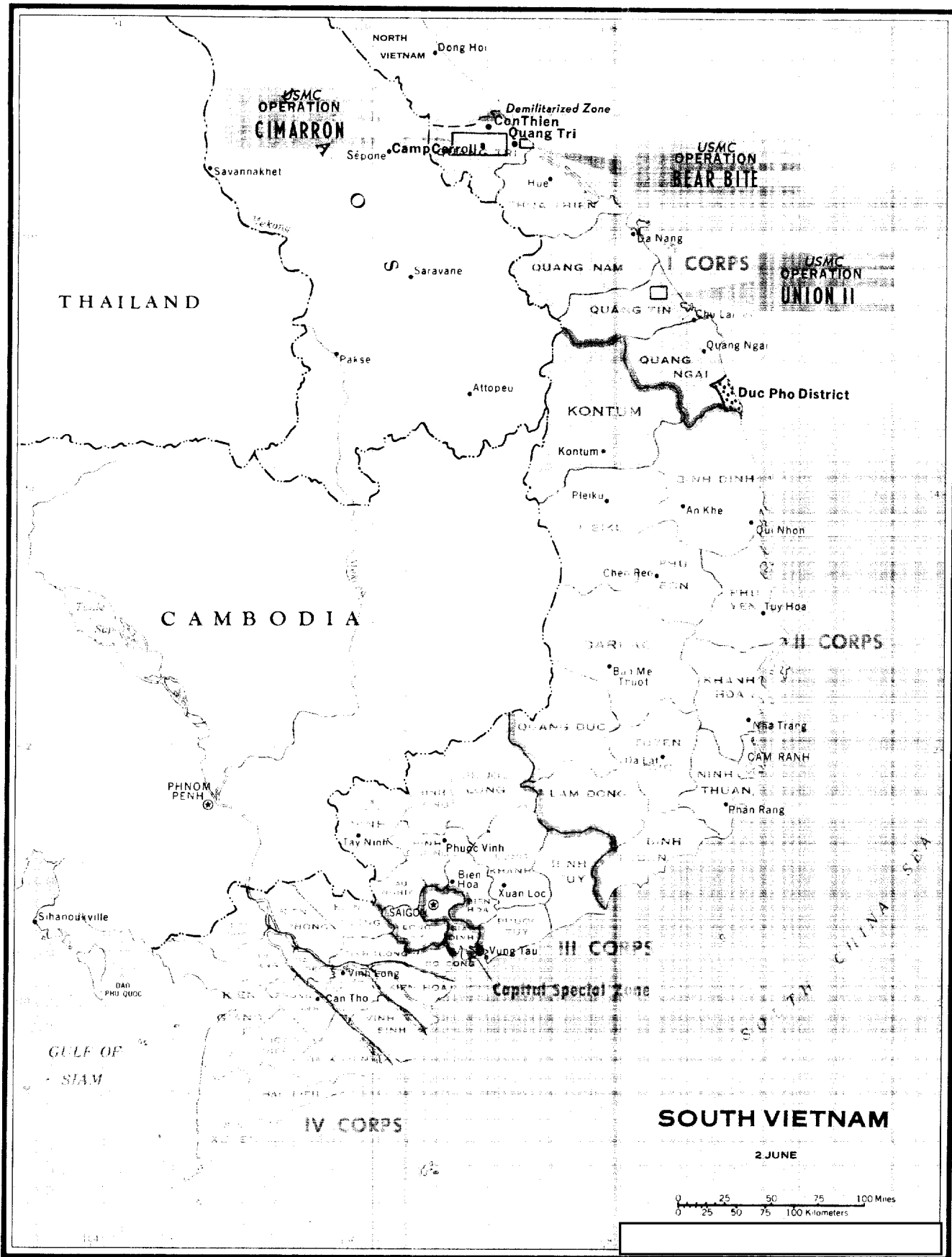
V. Communist Political Developments: Two leading Communist military figures have authored articles dealing with the military situation in the South (Paras. 1-7). The USSR has protested the alleged strafing of a Soviet ship near Haiphong (Paras. 8-11).

VI. Other Major Aspects: An unusual number of river cargo craft have been observed on the Se Kong (river) in southern Laos (Para. 1).

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I. THE MILITARY SITUATION IN SOUTH VIETNAM

1. In their continuing effort to drive the North Vietnamese Army (NVA) regulars from strategic hilltop positions near the allied outpost at Con Thien just south of the Demilitarized Zone (DMZ) in northern Quang Tri Province, US Marines of Operation CIMARRON have reported sporadic contact with enemy forces in well-prepared defensive positions several miles southwest of Con Thien. From one of these hilltops, both Con Thien and the 175-mm. artillery positions at Camp Carroll could be seen.

2. Casualties in this two-day-old operation already total 12 Americans killed and another 98 wounded. Cumulative Communist casualties reported thus far are seven killed, but should go higher when body counts are completed in the areas that have been subjected to intense air and artillery bombardments.

3. US Marines launched a new offensive--code named BEAR BITE--against NVA regulars in the coastal flatlands of northernmost Quang Tri Province on 2 June. A battalion of US Marine Special Landing Team A made an amphibious assault on the coast about seven miles east of Quang Tri city to seek out the 3,000 enemy soldiers believed to be within the sweep area. No contact with the enemy has yet been reported.

Enemy Contact in Quang Tin Province

4. Two US Marine companies in Operation UNION II made heavy contact with an enemy force 33 miles northwest of Chu Lai in Quang Tin Province on 2 June. Preliminary casualty reports state that 71 of the enemy have been killed while the Marines have lost 55 killed and 100 wounded. At last report the action was continuing.

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5. Farther north a South Vietnamese airborne battalion engaged an estimated battalion-sized NVA force about three miles north of Quang Tri city on 2 June. The enemy force withdrew following heavy allied air and artillery strikes, leaving 150 dead soldiers and 30 weapons behind, according to ARVN field reports. Friendly casualties were reported as one killed and 40 wounded, including two Americans.

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Communist "Combat Village" Concept Upset in Quang Ngai Province

9. [] captured recently during US Army Operation MALHEUR, states that the "combat village" system in Duc Pho District, Quang Ngai Province, had been destroyed by allied operations since February 1967. US Marines conducting Operations DE SOTO and DECKHOUSE IV in February and March reported encountering elaborate bunkers and tunnels in enemy-controlled villages in this area.

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10. [] also stated that the Communists had not implemented a military draft in Duc Pho this year, citing the fact that there are some 50 youths of military age in his native village who have not been drafted.

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II. POLITICAL DEVELOPMENTS IN SOUTH VIETNAM

1. The Constituent Assembly, now called the Provisional National Assembly, completed debate on the upper house election regulations on 29 May and was scheduled to review them on 2 June. The assembly should decide the date for the presidential election and the method of nominating presidential candidates, as requested by the Directorate, today or during its next few sessions.

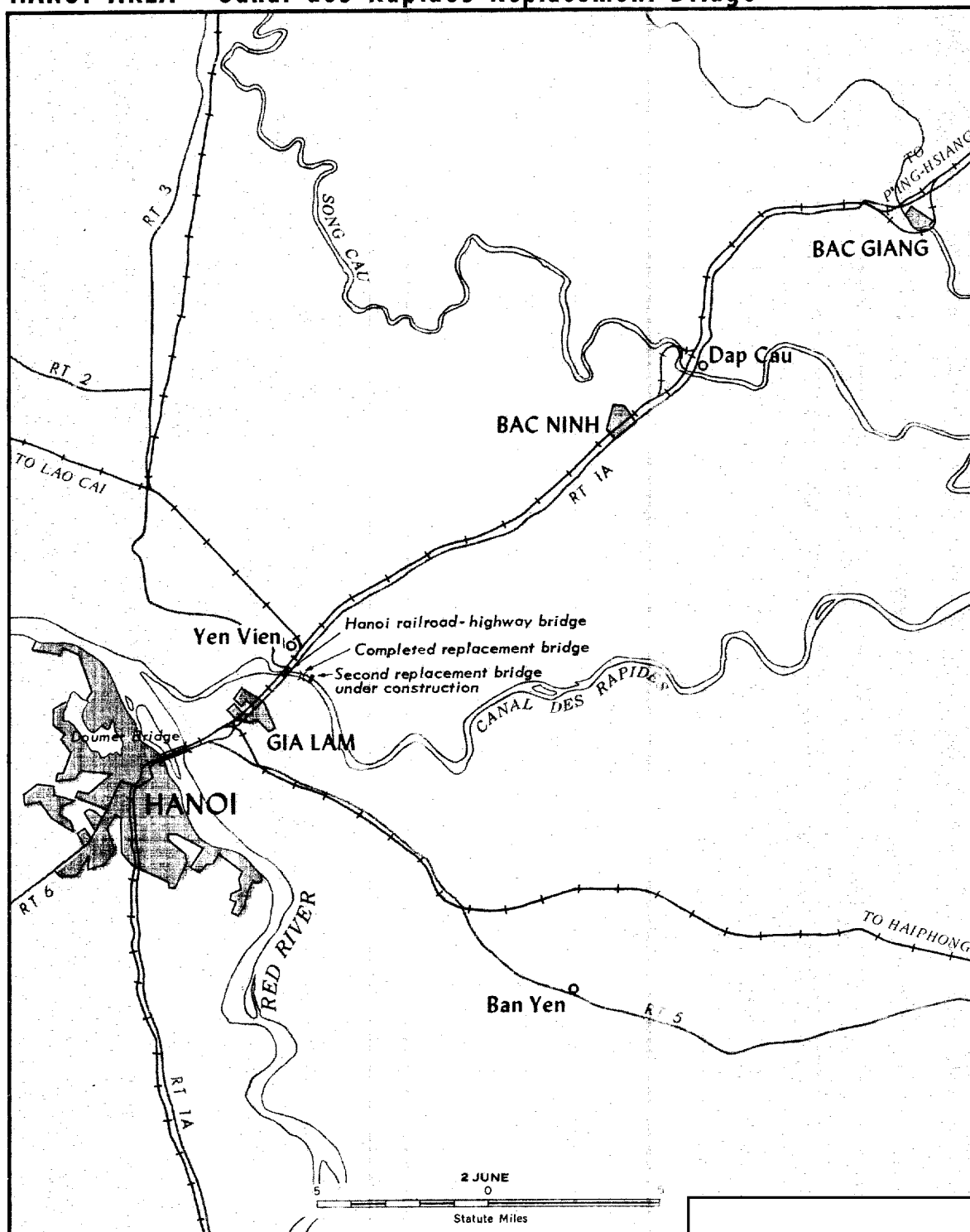
2. In the meantime, Police Director Loan has continued to act as the GVN's liaison contact with the assembly, holding dinners with selected assemblymen on 22 and 25 May. In sharp contrast to his previous meetings with military deputies from the assembly, Loan's approach during the most recent meetings was politically in a low key. During the dinner on the 25th, which was attended by approximately 40 civilian deputies, most of whom were from the pro-GVN Democratic-Alliance Bloc, Loan did comment that the GVN would like the presidential and upper house elections on the same day. The matter apparently was not pursued, however. It appears that Loan has taken the alleged advice of Bui Diem to soften his tone in dealing with potentially significant political groups. Assembly deputies had indicated in private conversations with government leaders that such an approach would prove effective.

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HANOI AREA - Canal des Rapides Replacement Bridge



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III. MILITARY DEVELOPMENTS IN NORTH VIETNAM

1. The North Vietnamese [redacted]

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[redacted] constructed a replacement bridge over the Canal des Rapides about 20 days after the original was destroyed by US air attacks in late April.

2. [redacted] a

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700-foot all steel truss railroad and vehicular bridge was in operation just to the east of the original bridge. The approaches and piers for the replacement bridge had been in place for some time. The steelwork presumably had been assembled and hidden nearby as an emergency measure.

3. The original Canal des Rapides Bridge was one of the longest in North Vietnam. The North Vietnamese probably calculated that a bridge of this size on the main land supply route from China required a permanent replacement rather than the usual makeshift repairs. Another alternate rail bridge is under construction down river from the newly completed bridge. No preparations for a permanent replacement have been noted, however, for the even longer Paul Doumer Bridge on the same rail line.

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IV. OTHER COMMUNIST MILITARY DEVELOPMENTS

1. There is nothing of significance to report.

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V. COMMUNIST POLITICAL DEVELOPMENTS

1. Again this year leading Communist military figures in South Vietnam have authored articles dealing with the military situation in South Vietnam. These articles were written by politburo member Nguyen Chi Thanh and a leading South Vietnamese Communist military figure who writes under the pseudonym Truong Son. They suggest that the controversy over the conduct of the war which was evident in a similar pair of evaluations done for the same period at this time last year has been resolved and that the protagonists concerned in last year's debate presently view the military situation in the same light.

2. The latest articles, published in late May, lacked any of the polemical overtones which characterized those written in 1966 and focused rather on the present "advantageous" military and political situation of the Communist forces in the South. In particular, on the question of the interrelation of the three forms of military in the South--main force, local force, and guerrillas--which was a point of controversy in the 1966 assessments, the articles declared that all three kinds of armed forces have been "fostered and developed in a planned way, evenly, proportionately, and in conformity with the practical conditions on the battlefield."

3. Truong Son's article offered a relatively sober, detailed, and confident analysis of the situation in the South. Son characterized the present US military situation as "a period of serious stalemate." This, he claimed, was the result of the failure of the US strategy which he described as one designed to break up main force units through repeated search-and-destroy operations, which were intended to be followed up by an intensive pacification effort designed to gain control of large segments of the population and to shrink the Communist area of control. He admitted that at first,

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the Communist military leaders in the South did not know how to cope with this US strategy and pointed out that if the Americans were able to scatter the main force units thereby forcing the Communists to return to guerrilla warfare the US would "strategically speaking" have won victory and would have been able to end the war by launching major attacks.

4. Gradually, however, according to Truong Son, Communist forces in the South evolved a way in which to fight the Americans, and claimed that this counterstrategy was proving successful. According to Son, this strategy began in the fall of 1966 with simultaneous attacks and counterattacks designed to force the US to fight on Communist terms. This would split and scatter the US forces and by stretching them thin allow the Communists to "strike the US in all places while keeping sufficient forces with which to attack the enemy everywhere, and when necessary to concentrate forces in the key areas." Major efforts were to be made to prevent the US from fighting its own way in pitched battles.

5. This strategy, Son thought, had been particularly advantageous in the past few months and had forced the US to adopt a defensive policy and had also led to increasingly heavy US casualties. To bolster this last point, Son quoted statistics on US casualties which, while somewhat exaggerated, did reveal that the Communists have a fairly accurate assessment of growing US losses in the South.

6. Son described the Communist manner of fighting as "flexible, multiform and highly efficacious" ranging from ambushes to large operations. In fact, Son stated, some of "our battles" do not bear a very great military significance but have a great political and economic value. He pointed to the VC attack on Quang Tri city in early April as an example of a battle that had only minor military significance but one which created serious political consequences for the US and for the Saigon government.

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7. General Thanh's article, published on 31 May, differed in no significant way from Truong Son's but lacked detailed insights into Communist thinking about the war. Rather, like much of the general propaganda that has been turned out on the "dry season campaign," Thanh's article appeared to be primarily a propaganda device designed to bolster Communist claims of "impending victory" in the South.

Soviets Protest Alleged Strafing of Ship Near Haiphong

8. Moscow TASS international has announced that Soviet Foreign Minister Gromyko handed the US chargé a note protesting the alleged strafing of a Soviet ship by US planes on 2 June in the harbor of Cam Pha port, 50 miles north of Haiphong.

9. TASS quotes the stiffly worded message as demanding strict punishment for those responsible and stating that in the event of a recurrence of such actions the USSR "will be compelled to take appropriate measures to ensure the safety of its ships." It further stated that the Soviet Government is awaiting assurances that there will be no recurrence of such actions.

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11. The Soviet Union has twice before formally protested to the US alleged near misses or direct hits on Soviet shipping in Haiphong, but did not claim any injuries. These incidents occurred in the summer of 1966. The present note is couched in stronger language than its predecessors and is the first to state that the Soviet Union will be compelled to take measures to ensure the safety of its ships if such attacks recur.

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LAOS PANHANDLE



VI. OTHER MAJOR ASPECTS

1. An unusual number of river cargo craft have been observed in southern Laos. Between 27 and 29 May trained observers along the Se Kong (river) northeast of the Bolovens plateau reported 146 loaded small boats--dugouts, skiffs, and rubber rafts--moving south.

2. In addition to cargo, each boat reportedly carried a small number of armed soldiers. Although the soldiers and supplies may be destined for South Vietnam, it is possible that they are intended to bolster Communist forces that recently opposed Laotian Government clearing operations around the rim of the Bolovens plateau.

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